

Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham

(King's Champion)

In the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V.



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Fields, London, England, A.D.
1417. His residence was at
Cowling Castle, Kent.



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The Algoma and Northwest Evangelical and
Colportage Mission.

63 O'Hara Avenue, Parkdale, Toronto, 1912.

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Though known as a godly man and having been high in favor with the King and the people, he was betrayed by Lord Powis in Wales and dragged on an hurdle in chains to the stake and hanged over a slow fire and roasted to death with insult and barbarity.

Lord Cobham was the sixth person burned in England as an heretic. The persecution continued one hundred and fifty years, thus leaving us examples for our imitation.

Blessed be God for the liberty and security of our times, the outcome of the faithfulness and sufferings of those who have gone before. Long may it last!

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In the fourteenth century, true religion scarcely existed in England; it may justly be said that the days were evil. The papal usurpation of power over the consciences of men was then at its height; for error and superstition had been advancing during the preceding centuries, till both the doctrines and the precepts of our Lord, as declared in the Scriptures, were no longer taught by those who professed to be His followers; the little that remained of the truth was corrupted and concealed from view, by the superstitions and vain traditions of men. The Scriptures were almost unknown both to the laity and the clergy; in a word, darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people. Complaints, however, of the abuses of Popery began to be heard; a few individuals eminent for their abilities ventured to bear testimony against the errors which prevailed; and some there were in humbler stations who rejoiced in the precious truths of the gospel; for, though poor as to this world, they were rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Among the more eminent characters, Thomas Bradwardine was conspicuous: he did not, it is true, stand forth like Grosseteste in the preceding century, and personally oppose the usurpations and errors of the Church of Rome; but examining calmly into the truths of the gospel, he wrote fully upon the subject of Divine grace, pointing out the helplessness and unworthiness of man by nature, and his need of a better righteousness than his own; deriving the knowledge of these truths from the Scriptures. A valuable historian of the Church of Christ says—"Bradwardine had observed how very few in his days appeared to be conscious of their need of the Holy Spirit to renew their natures; and being himself deeply sensible of the desperate wickedness of the human heart (Jer. 17: 9), and of the preciousness of the grace of Christ, he seems to have overlooked, or little regarded the fashionable superstitions of his time, and to have applied the whole vigor and vehemence of his spirit to the defence of the foundation of the gospel." He has been called "the

morning star of the reformation." One sentence, extracted from his works, will convey to the reader an idea of his humility of spirit, and of the manner in which he looked to God for direction:—"Arise, O Lord, judge thy own cause. Sustain him who undertakes to defend thy truth; protect, strengthen and comfort me; for Thou knowest that no where relying on my own strength, but trusting in Thine, I, a weak worm, attempt to maintain so great a cause." Let every one who advocates the cause of truth endeavor to proceed in a similar spirit.

The immediate design of the following pages does not admit of particular details respecting the early followers of the truth in our land. But it may be stated, that, before the invention of printing, books were scarce, and but few copies of any works could be circulated; thus one great means of diffusing truth and opposing error could hardly be said to exist; while the few writings which were sent abroad were easily suppressed, if deemed objectionable by the Church of Rome. Several, doubtless, have thus perished whose contents would be interesting to us; some few, however, have survived. "The praier and complaynte of the plowman unto Christ, written soon after the yere of our Lorde a thousande and thre hundred," presents a striking picture of the spiritual bondage under which our forefathers groaned, and shows that some, even in humble life, called not upon saints, nor the virgin Mary, but upon "Jesus Christ, to have mercy and pity upon his poor servants, and to help them in their great need to fight against sin, and the devil, who is the author of sin;" for thus this interesting document begins; and from its being called the Ploughman's Prayer, we may conclude that there were some laborers who used similar language. The vision of Pierce Plowman might also be referred to, which boldly showed how the fashionable religion of that period had departed widely from scriptural truth. And in the writings of Chaucer and Gower, two poets of those times, we find sufficient evidence that the gospel had made considerable progress, even in that day. In promoting this work, Wickliff was the great instrument.

John Wickliff was a distinguished member of the University of Oxford, where he rendered himself con-

spicuous, soon after the middle of the fourteenth century, by determined opposition to the Dominican and Franciscan friars, who then infested the kingdom, and especially that university. They taught that the absurdities which they maintained were more perfect than the truths contained in the word of God; they asserted that Christ had not only recommended the course they followed, but had set an example himself by becoming a mendicant friar; and declared that all who became members of their orders were sure of salvation. They levied contributions from the ignorant especially when upon their sick beds; many purchased at a high price, the worn-out garments of these friars believing that if their bodies were committed to the grave wrapped in them, their souls would be sure of admission into the kingdom of heaven. Wickliff boldly opposed these friars, and bore testimony against the anti-Christian proceedings of the Pope, by whom their abominations were encouraged. His opposition was grounded on a firm foundation; he saw that for the soul to be without knowledge was not good. To forward the progress of truth, Wickliff translated the Bible into the English language, which was the most useful measure he could have devised.* The Romish clergy loudly objected to this proceeding: the following curious specimen shows the manner in which the ecclesiastics of that day reasoned on this subject:—"Christ," says one of them, "committed the gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church, that they might minister it to the laity and weaker persons, according as the times and people's wants might require; but this master John Wickliff translated it out of Latin into English, and by that means laid it more open to the laity, and to women who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understand. And so the gospel

*There were translations of some parts of the Scriptures, as early as the days of Alfred, who himself translated the Psalms; but they had become obsolete, and were very scarce. Wickliff was the first who translated the whole Scriptures into English, in a language and style understood by the people.

pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under swine; and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common jest of both; and the jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the laity."

The reader cannot fail to remark the exact similarity between these arguments of the Romish priests in the fourteenth century, and those which are urged by the same class of individuals at the present day. They will rather suppose that they are reading the address of a papal advocate in Ireland in our own time, than the words of Knighton, a learned canon of Leicester, who lived at the same time as Wickliff, from whose writings this passage is taken. It is another proof, if proof were wanting when the fact is admitted on both sides, that the Church of Rome has always opposed the circulation of the Scriptures among the people. "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:19-20). But we must not stop to relate the particulars of Wickliff's history. They are deeply interesting, and are noticed by most historians who record the events in those days. He was a bold and undaunted opposer of the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome, and has been appropriately called "the rising sun of the reformation." The times in which he lived were turbulent, but God was pleased to over-rule the political proceedings of some men of rank and influence in the state, so that they protected him from the malice of the Romish prelates, and he died in peace at his living of Lutterworth, in the year 1387. One of his latest efforts was to bear his testimony against the unchristian proceedings of the popes of that day, for there were two! Pope Urban VI took up arms against his opponent, Pope Clement, and appointed the Romish Bishop of Norwich to be his general, and sent his bulls, or decrees, into England, promising spiritual indulgences and pardons for sin, both here and hereafter, to all who would assist him personally, or with money, in this ungodly warfare. "The banner of Christ on the cross," Wickliff says, "which is the token of peace, mercy and charity. is used to slay Christians for their

attachment to two false priests, who are open anti-Christ, that they may maintain their worldly state, and oppress Christendom worse than Christ and his apostles were oppressed by the Jews. Why," adds he, "will not the proud priest of Rome grant full pardon to all men, to live and die in peace, and charity, and patience instead of encouraging all men to fight and slay Christians?" Wickliff was commonly styled, "the Gospel doctor"; and a firm attachment to the truths of the gospel was evidently the leading principle which actuated his conduct.

The Romish prelates, after much consultation, brought a bill into parliament to suppress Wickliff's translation of the Bible; but it was rejected by a great majority;* and for a short time the circulation of his version was permitted: it must, however, have been very limited, for the art of printing was then unknown, and few persons had means sufficient to purchase a written copy. From the register of Alnwick, Bishop of Norwich, it appears that a testament of Wickliff's version, in the year 1429, cost four marks and forty pence, or £2 16s. 8d. (equal to more than £20 of our present money); a large sum in those days, when five pounds was considered sufficient for the annual maintenance of a respectable tradesman, or a yeoman, or one of the inferior clergy.

Although the circulation of the Scriptures in the English language must have been comparatively small, yet still, under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit, it produced considerable effects; there can be

*The parliamentary proceedings of those times throw considerable light upon the grasping power of Rome, and also show that our ancestors did not willingly submit to the encroachments of papal authority. But their efforts were in vain. In the year 1316, the clergy had obtained a law exempting them from secular authority, even for heinous offences, such as robbery and murder. We also find, that the Commons in parliament presented a petition to the King in 1376, in which they state the result of an inquiry, as showing that the taxes paid yearly to the Pope, from England, amounted to five times the revenues of the King!

no doubt that the word of God was in this, as in other instances, the means of bringing many unto the knowledge of the truth, and turning them from the ways of the world to the practice of godliness. These followers of Christ soon experienced the truth of our Lord's declaration, "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

Courtney, when Bishop of London, was strenuous in his opposition to Wickliff: he was afterwards appointed to the see of Canterbury; and as the reformer himself was protected from the effects of his power, he engaged with activity in persecuting his followers, who were called Lollards—one of those names of reproach by which the followers of Christ have been reviled in all ages. It is supposed to have been derived from Walter Lollardus, one of the teachers of these truths on the continent, or from a German word "lollen," which signifies psalm-singers. Many of them, who were preachers, travelled about the country, in the simplest manner, barefoot and in common frieze gowns, preaching in the market-places, and teaching the doctrines of truth with great zeal and much success. In a few years their numbers were very considerable; it was calculated that at least one-fourth of the nation were really or nominally inclined to these sentiments.

Knighton mentions several active preachers of the Lollards; among them was William Swinderby, a short account of whom will give an idea of these zealous servants of Christ. He was originally a hermit: coming to Leicester, he preached against the corruptions of the age, particularly reproving the pride and vanity of females, until, as we are told by the Romish historian, "the good and grave women, as well as the bad, threatened to stone him out of the place." He then addressed the merchants and rich men, denouncing those who neglected heavenly riches for worldly wealth: so often dwelling thereon, that, as the Romish chronicler remarks, had not the Divine clemency interposed, he had driven some honest men of the town into despair. Swinderby then became a recluse, but, after a short time, resumed his preaching, directing his discourses against the errors and vices of Popery.

Knighton, of course, stigmatizes his doctrines as erroneous, but adds, "He so captivated the affections of the people, that they said they never had seen or heard any one who so well explained the truth." Being excommunicated, and forbidden to preach in any church or churchyard, he made a pulpit of two mill-stones in the high street of Leicester, and there preached "in contempt of the bishop." "There," says Knighton, "you might see throngs of people from every port, as well from the town as the country, double the number there used to be when they might hear him lawfully." Swinderby was cited to appear before the Bishop of Lincoln, when he was convicted of heresy and errors, for which, it is said, "he deserved to be made fuel for fire." He was, however, allowed to escape. He afterwards settled at Coventry, where he preached and taught with greater success than before. Walsingham, another Popish historian, says, that the multitude raged in his behalf so as to deter the Bishop of Lincoln from further measures against him. Swinderby then retired to Herefordshire, where proceedings were instituted against him by the bishop of the diocese in 1391. Fox has given them at length from the registers of the bishop. They show that Swinderby taught the same doctrines as Wickliff, and was active in preaching the truth; but no particulars are recorded of the subsequent events of his life.*

*Reinerus, a Romish writer in the thirteenth century, believed to have been himself once a follower of the truth, but afterwards an apostate, and even an inquisitor of the Church of Rome, thus describes those whom he denounces as heretics. The description may be applied to the disciples of Wickliff, and the Lollards of England, as they existed from one to two hundred years afterwards; in many points, at least, the resemblance is very strong. Faber thus translates the account:—"Heretics are known by their manners and their words. In their manners they are composed and modest. They admit no pride of dress, holding a just mean between the expensive and the squalid. In order that they may the better avoid lies, oaths and trickery, they dislike entering into trade, but by the labor of their hands they live like ordinary hired workmen,

Their very teachers are mere artizans. Riches they seek not to multiply, but they are content with things necessary. They are chaste. In meat and drink they are temperate. They resort neither to taverns, nor to dances, nor to any other vanities. From anger they carefully restrain themselves. They are always engaged either in working, or in learning, or in teaching; and therefore they spend but little time in prayer. Under fictitious pretences, nevertheless, they will attend church, and offer, and confess, and communicate, and hear sermons; but this they do merely to cavil at the preacher's discourse. They may likewise be known by their precise and modest words, for they avoid all scurrility, and detraction, and lies, and oaths, and levity of speech." Reinerus then describes how, by offering jewellery and other articles for sale, they obtained opportunities for repeating to the noble and the great whole chapters from the Gospels, and explaining the scriptural nature of the doctrines they held.

Writings yet remain which show that these principles professed in the south of Europe were not long after held by thousands in England; and what shall be said of those who could censure such tenets as damnable, and inflict punishment, even to death, upon these simple and excellent people? The allegation that they pray but little shows they followed the directions of our blessed Lord, which they found in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 6:5-13), instead of using the vain repetitions of aves and credos, and the hours substituted by the Church of Rome for the prayer of the spirit and understanding. They were compelled to attend the public services, and could not but feel the necessity laid upon them—"Take heed what ye hear."

Richard II was at that time king of England; he countenanced the archbishop in persecuting the Wickliffites, and a proclamation was issued against all persons who should teach or maintain these opinions, or possess any of the books and pamphlets written by Wickliff and his followers. Many suffered imprisonment and were required to do penance under the most degrading circumstances; although it does not appear that any were actually put to death during this reign. This may partly be ascribed to the power and influence of the Duke of Lancaster, who was the great patron of

Wickliff; and of Queen Ann, the consort of Richard II, and sister of the King of Bohemia. That excellent princess seems to have been a pious character: we regret that the account given of her by the historians of those times is so very brief and imperfect; they, however, relate that she had in her possession the gospels in the English language, with four commentaries upon them. This is evidence of a mind not inattentive to the truths of the gospel, and a proof that she engaged in the study of the Scriptures; for in those days a person of her rank, especially a female, would not have sought to possess such expensive and uncommon works, unless she desired to profit from their contents.

After her decease, which took place in the year 1394, the Lollards were more cruelly harassed, and severer punishments were inflicted on all who dared to read the Scriptures in their own language.

Richard II was deposed, in the year 1399, by Henry of Lancaster, who succeeded to the throne. He was the son of John of Gaunt, who had been the constant patron of Wickliff, and his preserver in many scenes of difficulty and danger; but, widely differing from his father, Henry was no sooner seated on the throne, than he encouraged the ecclesiastics in their proceedings: under this monarch and Arundel, then Archbishop of Canterbury, a most violent persecution was commenced. The persecutions were general throughout the kingdom; everywhere the suppression of Lollardism was earnestly kept in view. Now, for the first time, was exhibited in England the spectacle of martyrs burned alive for their opposition to the abominations of Popery. From that period, during a hundred and fifty years, till the reformation freed the land from the shackles of papal power, this persecution continued: many followers of Christ had "trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yet, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments"; and others counted not their lives dear unto them, "having respect unto the recompense of the reward."

The design of this brief sketch is to give some account of these faithful witnesses for the truth, and the events connected with their history; it will show that there was a time when Englishmen dared not to read the Bible, nor worship God according to its dictates.

To return to our narrative. The prelates, finding that a vast number still professed the doctrines of the gospel, resolved to act with greater vigor, and presented an address to the King, noticing "the trouble and inquietness which was now risen by divers wicked and perverse men (as they called them) teaching and preaching, openly and privily, a new, wicked and heretical doctrine, contrary to the Catholic faith, and determination of the holy church." Whereupon the King, Henry IV, by the persuasion of the clergy, was induced, in the second year of his reign, to consent to a law against all persons who should "preach, maintain, teach, inform, openly or in secret, or make or write any book, contrary to the Catholic faith, and the determination of the holy church." It also prohibited conventicles or assemblies, or keeping any schools, "concerning this sect, wicked doctrine and opinion," and enacted that no man should "favor such preacher, maker of assemblies, or bookmaker, or writer, or teacher"; and that "all persons having such books or writings, should, within forty days, deliver them to the ordinary."* The law also directed that all persons who "should do or attempt any thing contrary to this statute, or should not deliver the books," should be arrested and detained in safe custody, till, "by order of the law, they cleared themselves, as touching the articles laid to his or their charge," or recanted their opinions. If convicted before their ordinary, or his

It is not intended to detail events of a political nature, but simply to refer to the history of those who suffered in the cause of Christ and His gospel, hoping that the readers may be led to think more deeply upon these subjects than they have yet done; and that they may peruse this account of past times with profit to themselves, and thankfulness to Him who has appointed their lot in a far different period.

*By "the ordinary," is meant the person who possesses the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in any place; it usually refers to the bishop of the diocese. The reader will observe that judgment was to be passed upon those accused of heresy, at the pleasure of the clergy, without any trial before the judges of the land, or by a jury.

commissioners, they were to be laid in any of his prisons, and there to be kept so long as by his discretion shall be thought expedient; if they refused to abjure, the mayor, or sheriffs, or other magistrates were to be present with the ordinary when required, and to confer with him in giving sentence against the parties convicted: and after the said sentence so pronounced, it was enacted that such mayor, etc., "shall take unto them the said persons so offending, and any of them, and cause them openly to be burned in the sight of all the people; to the intent that this kind of punishment may be a terror unto others; and the like wicked doctrines and heretical opinions, or authorers and favorers thereof, be no more maintained within this realm and dominions, to the great hurt of the Christian religion, and the decrees of the holy church." Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, proceeded, without loss of time, to put this bloody law into force, even during the session of parliament in which it was passed!

William Sawtree was the first English martyr burned alive for opposing the abominations of Popery. He was priest of St. Osyth's in the city of London; and although at one time he had been induced to renounce before the Bishop of Norwich the sentiments he held, yet he was enabled, by the grace of God, to see his error, and again openly to profess the truths of the gospel. On Saturday, February 12, 1401, he was summoned to appear before the Archbishop of Canterbury, and accused of holding heretical opinions. The principal articles against him were, that he had said, "He would not worship the cross on which Christ suffered, but only Christ that suffered upon the cross; that every priest and deacon is more bound to preach the word of God than to say particular services at the canonical hours; and that after the pronouncing of the sacramental words of the body of Christ, the bread remaineth of the same nature that it was before, neither doth it cease to be bread."

A few days were allowed him to answer these accusations; when he appeared and delivered his reply, in which he fully explained his views; and being required by the archbishop to renounce his opinions he refused to do so. He was then examined more par-

ticularly respecting the sacrament of the altar; and continuing to defend the doctrines he had advanced on that subject, he was condemned as a heretic, and sentence* was pronounced against him.

The council adjourned for a few days, when the record of the former process against Sawtree by the Bishop of Norwich was brought forward; he was again called to say whether he still affirmed that "in the sacrament of the altar, after the consecration made by the priest, there remaineth material bread," and as he refused to recant, the proceedings against him were continued. He was degraded from the priesthood on the 26th of February, according to the form and ceremony usual upon such occasions in the Church of Rome, and committed to the custody of the high constable and marshal of England, with the phrase used upon these occasions, "requesting the said court that they will receive favorably the said William Sawtree, thus committed unto them."

The real intention of this hypocritical expression was soon manifested. The Romish prelates urged the King to cause the sentence to be executed; a writ was issued

*A copy is here inserted, that the reader may see the sentence under which the first English martyr in the cause of truth suffered death: it also shows the awful manner in which these persecutors profaned the name of the Most High:

"In the name of God, amen. We, Thomas, by the grace of God, Archbishop of Canterbury, primate of England, and legate of the see apostolical, by the authority of God Almighty, and blessed of St. Peter and Paul, and of holy church, and by our own authority, sitting for tribunal, or chief judge, having God alone before our eyes, by the council and consent of the whole clergy, our fellow brethren and suffragans, assistants to us in this present council provincial, by this our sentence definitive, do pronounce, decree and declare by these presents, thee William Sawtree, otherwise called Chawtrey, parish priest pretended, personally appearing before us, in and upon the crime of heresy, judicially and lawfully convict as an heretic to be punished."

on the same day, directed to the mayor and sheriffs of London, purporting to be the decree of the King "against a certain new sprung up heretic," commanding them to "cause the said William, in some public or open place within the liberties of the city (the cause being published unto the people), to be put in the fire, and there in the same fire really to be burned, to the great horror of his offence, and the manifest example of other Christians."

The sentence was carried into execution without loss of time; the martyr "really was burned." Thus Henry IV was the first English king who caused Christ's saints to be burned for opposing the Pope; and William Sawtree was the first who suffered in this cause in England, as appears by the public registers and other documents of authority: how different the estimate in which the monarch and the sufferer should be held from that given to them by the world!

The Romish prelates were eager to use the power thus given them. Accordingly they were diligent in carrying the penalties into execution; and, as Fox expresses himself, "it cost many a Christian man his life."

We may also observe, that this law was especially enacted for the purpose of destroying the first attempts at reformation: it was not a plan already in force, nor an old law of our land newly revived; but it was adopting the bloody practice which had prevailed on the continent during the two preceding centuries, when the Church of Rome first openly declared war against the saints of the Most High.* About the year 1200, Dominic and his followers were appointed inquisitors, and authorized to commit to the flames those whom they deemed heretics; thus adopting the plans of the heathen persecutors, Dioclesian and others. Fox observes, although the laws of the heathens differ in form from the statute just mentioned, yet in the ends proposed, and the cruelties by which they were enforced, there is no difference between them; and they

*The first who suffered by fire for opposing the errors of the Church of Rome were some canons of Orleans in France. They were burned in the year 1017.

must be referred to the same author or original doer. "For the same Satan which then wrought his uttermost against Christ, now also doth what he can, and seeks to spill the blood of the saints."

John Badby is the next martyr that requires our attention: he was of a humbler rank in life, a tailor by trade. On Sunday, March 1, 1409, he was brought before Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, with other lords and bishops, and accused of maintaining that, "after the sacramental words spoken by the priests, to make the body of Christ, the material bread doth remain upon the altar as in the beginning; neither is it turned into the very body of Christ after the sacramental words spoken by the priests." To which it was added, that he had further said, "It was impossible that any priest should make the body of Christ, and that he never could believe it, unless he saw manifestly the body of Christ in the hands of the priest; and that when Christ sat at supper with His disciples, He had not His body in His hand to distribute to His disciples, but spoke figuratively, as He had done at other times." The archbishop endeavored, by arguments and exhortations, to change his opinions. Among other things, it is related, that "the said archbishop said and affirmed there openly to the said John, that he would (if he would live according to the doctrine of Christ) gage (or pledge) his soul for him at the judgment day!" Similar offers have repeatedly been made in later days by the Romish clergy! But the Bible expressly declares, "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psa. 49:7).

The articles were again read, and Badby was called upon to reply to them. He did not shrink from bearing a faithful testimony; among other things, he stated his firm belief, "that after the consecration at the altar, there remaineth material bread, and the same bread which was before; notwithstanding," said he, "it was a sign or sacrament of the living God." He added, "that he would believe the omnipotent God in Trinity, which they had accused him of denying; and that if every host (or wafer used in the sacrament), being consecrated at the altar, were the Lord's body, then there would be 20,000 gods in England."

After much time spent in discussion, Badby was committed to close custody till the 15th of March. On that day, he was called before the bishops and the temporal lords assembled in St. Paul's. The archbishop, finding him resolute, and that what he said appeared in some degree to affect others, pronounced sentence against him as a heretic, and delivered him over to the temporal lords then present, using the hypocritical form of "desiring that they would not put him to death for his offence."

This sentence being passed on Badby in the morning, the King's writ for his execution was sent down in the afternoon of the same day. He was immediately led to Smithfield; and being placed in an empty barrel, he was bound with iron chains, fastened to a stake, and dry wood was put about him.

The Prince of Wales (afterwards Henry V) was present and admonished Badby to recant his opinions, adding threatenings if he persisted in his heresies; also Courtney, the chancellor of Oxford, preached a sermon in which he set forth the faith of the Church of Rome.

While this was passing, the prior of St. Bartholomew's in Smithfield brought, with much solemnity, the sacrament of the host, carried in procession with twelve torches; and showed the consecrated bread to the poor man fastened to the stake, demanding of him what he believed it to be. He answered, "that he knew well it was hallowed bread, and not God's body"; upon which the fire was immediately kindled. When he felt the flames, he cried, "Mercy!" (most probably as a prayer to God, and not to man). The prince hearing this, ordered the fire to be quenched: which being done, he asked Badby if he would now forsake heresy and turn to the faith of the holy church; promising that if he would do so, he should have a reward and a yearly stipend out of the treasury, as much he could require.

Here, indeed, was a tempting proposal on the one hand, an immediate and painful death on the other; and not only pardon and deliverance, but also an ample supply for all his future wants! Badby was enabled to refuse these offers. "Wherefore the prince commanded him to be put again into the barrel, and that he should not look for any grace or favor. But as he was not allured by their rewards, even so he was nothing

abashed at their torments, but persevered immoveable to the end; not without great and most cruel battle, but with much greater triumph of victory, the Spirit of Christ enabling him to subdue the fury, rage and power of the world."

The reader will observe that both Sawtree and Badby were condemned and burned as heretics, because they would not believe in the Popish doctrine of transubstantiation. It is the more important to notice this, for all the modern Romanists assert this doctrine as fully as it was set forth in the times to which we refer. One instance will sufficiently prove this, as every modern publication of that church upon the subject, from the decrees of the Council of Trent to the present day, states this doctrine in express terms. The Laity's Directory for 1824 (which is an annual publication, containing various lists of chapels and schools, and other information intended for Roman Catholics) contains an address respecting the sacrament of the eucharist from a Roman Catholic prelate, the vicar apostolic (or bishop) of the London district, in which it is asserted, in the strongest terms, that "by the consecration of bread and wine, there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood of Christ. Consequently, the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the eucharist, and of transubstantiation (or of the mode of his presence), is there declared to be equally true and equally to be believed as the doctrine of the Trinity, of the Divinity of Christ, of the necessity and effect of baptism, of the future resurrection of our bodies, and of the other revealed articles of the Christian religion. It is impossible to deny the doctrine of the real presence, and at the same time, with any consistency, to believe as true any article of the Christian faith."—Reader, mark how the opinions and doctrines of the Romish church remain unchanged!

After the passing of the above-mentioned law, Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, continued to direct the most rigorous measures against the Lollards. He decreed that every person calling in question any determination of the church, was to be excommunicated for the first offence, and burned as a heretic for the second. He forbade all books from being read which were not

licensed by persons authorized by the universities; and in the strongest and most positive terms prohibited the reading of any part of the Scriptures in English, or any other tongue, until the translation was allowed by the ordinary; stating, that "it is a dangerous thing to translate the text of the Holy Scriptures out of one tongue into another." Surely this assertion cannot be read with indifference. Already, many a poor Indian, or South Sea Islander, once an unenlightened heathen, has had reason to bless God that he has not suffered Protestants to entertain such an opinion.

William Thorpe, a priest noted for his abilities, was one of the number who contended valiantly for the faith which was delivered unto the saints. He was imprisoned, in the year 1407, in the castle of Saltwood in Kent; and being brought before the archbishop, was required to abjure; upon which he stated the particulars of his faith, desiring to be convinced of his errors, if he in any point maintained what was contrary to the law of God. Arundel replied by again requiring him to forsake the sect of Lollards, and in future to abstain from holding any opinion which might be pointed out to him as erroneous. To this Thorpe was required to declare his assent upon oath, and also to promise that he would, in future, denounce and inform against any whom he might find holding such opinions; but with these conditions he refused to comply. The archbishop then threatened that he should be burned in Smithfield. "At this saying," observes Thorpe, "I stood still, and spake not; but I thought in mine heart that God did to me great grace, if he would, of his great mercy, bring me to such an end." He then goes on to say, "In my heart I prayed the Lord God to comfort me, and strengthen me against them, and I prayed God, for his goodness, to give me then and always grace to speak with a meek and an easy spirit; and whatsoever thing that I should speak, I might thereto have true authorities of the Scriptures, or open reason." How simple yet how pleasing a picture of a true follower of Christ, "steadfast in the faith," desirous meekly to render a reason of the hope that is in him!

The examination then proceeded at great length. With respect to the doctrine of transubstantiation, Thorpe desired simply to refer to the words of Scrip-

ture, neither offering to explain them himself, nor seeking to have them explained by human reasoning according to the scholastic quibbles introduced by Thomas Aquinas, and adopted by the Church of Rome. Upon the subject of images, the archbishop asserted, that "a crucifix ought to be worshipped for the passion (suffering) of Christ that is painted thereon, and so brought to man's mind, and thus the images of the blessed Trinity, and of the Virgin Mary, and other images of saints, ought to be worshipped." This branch of the examination was stopped, after some further discussion, by Thorpe's inquiring of the prelate, "Since the Father of heaven, that is, God in his Godhead, is the most unknown thing that may be, and the most wonderful Spirit, having no shape, nor likeness, nor members of any mortal creature; in what likeness, or what image, may God the Father be painted?" After further examination upon the subjects of confession, pilgrimages and other errors of the Church of Rome, Thorpe was again committed to a noisome prison. His end is uncertain; but as the registers do not state that he was burned, it appears most probable that he was secretly put to death in prison, or died there by sickness. Had he recanted, the Romanists would have boasted of it. A like end had previously been the fate of John Ashton, who, refusing to recant the doctrines of Wickliff respecting the sacrament, was committed to perpetual imprisonment, and died in confinement.

Having now, in some degree, checked the progress of truth, the Romish prelates had more leisure to attend to the regulation of their ceremonies; among other things, Archbishop Arundel about this time directed a mandate to the Bishop of London, to warn men to say certain prayers to the Virgin Mary at the ringing of the curfew bell. A short extract from this curious document may suffice. After speaking of "the mother of God" in lofty terms, it goes on to state: "We truly, as the servants of her own inheritance, and such as are written of to be her peculiar dower, ought more watchfully than others to show our devotion in praising her, who being hitherto merciful to us (yea being even cowards), would that our power being spread through all the coasts of the world, should, with a victorious

arm, fear (terrify) all foreign nations. That our power being on all sides so defended with the buckler of her protection, did subdue unto our victorious standards, and made subject unto us, nations both near at hand and far off."

The Papists are in general very fond of ascribing Divine honors to the Virgin Mary; they dignify her with many titles. For the most part, they are titles of mercy, as the mother of peace, and many similar; but here is a curious exception: she is addressed as a goddess presiding over war and bloodshed; and to her is ascribed precisely the powers which the heathens of old attributed to the goddess Bellona!*. The mandate then proceeds to enjoin, "that you command the subjects of your city and diocese, and all other suffragans, to worship our lady Mary, the mother of God, and our patroness and protectress ever more in all adversity, with such like kind of prayer and accustomed manner of ringing as the devotion of Christ's faithful people is wont to worship her with at the ringing of the curfew."—It then further states, that "We grant, by these presents, to all and every man that shall say the Lord's prayer, and the salutation of the angel (Luke 1:28), five times at the morning peal, with a devout mind, forty days' pardon." Yes, reader, forty days' pardon of sin, for repeating the Lord's prayer five times, and "Hail, Mary!" five times more; and this not the reveries of a distracted mind, but the declaration of the first ecclesiastic in the land, set forth in a solemn instrument, and commanded by authority! as appears from his own register.† We find from the

*The virgin is frequently represented in this character in Roman legends, even of more recent date. She, and her images, are said to have fought repeatedly against Moors, Indians and infidels. At the siege of Rhodes, she is reported to have appeared in person upon the walls, accompanied by John the Baptist, both well armed. It is added, that they slaughtered the Turks in an incredible manner!

†We may here notice that the Pope himself, in his Bull of Indiction, 1825, "grants and imparts the fullest and most complete indulgence, remission and par-

same authority (his own register) an order to suspend certain churches in London from the use of their organs, because their bells were not rung one morning as he passed unexpectedly through the city. This was not a solitary example of such attention being required; similar disputes occurred at Worcester and St. Alban's, on the same ground. Other instances of the capricious tyranny of this Romish prelate are also recorded; and in the canons of this Archbishop Arundel, passed in the year 1409, it is declared to be the most horrid of all crimes to dispute any of the doctrines, or to disobey any of the decrees of the Pope, who is blasphemously denominated, "the key bearer and porter of eternal life and death, bearing the place and person, not of a mere man, but of true God here in earth." At the very time these canons were passed to keep the people in the unity of faith under one head of the church, there were actually three popes, openly excommunicating and anathematizing each other; and, at length, they were all declared heretics by the decree of one general council, and soon afterwards deposed by the sentence of another; yet Romanists assert that the decrees of the Pope are equal in authority to the Scriptures, nay, superior to them.

Lord Cobham is the next sufferer who claims our attention. In the year 1413, King Henry IV died, and was succeeded by his son, Henry V. This prince has been already noticed in the account of John Badby. Immediately after his accession to the throne, Archbishop Arundel caused a synod of the clergy to be held at St. Paul's. The principal cause of its assembling was to repress the growth of the gospel, especially to withstand the noble and worthy Lord Cobham, who was noted as a favorer of the Lollards. It was well known that he caused the writings of Wickliff to be copied and widely dispersed, and that he maintained

don of all their sins, to all the faithful of Christ, of both sexes, who are truly penitent, and have confessed and have partaken the holy communion, provided they shall have devoutly visited these churches (four are then mentioned) for thirty days, if inhabitants of Rome, or fifteen days, if strangers."

many itinerant preachers in different parts of the country. At this synod appeared the twelve inquisitors, who had been appointed at Oxford the year before, to search after heretics and Wickliff's books. They brought a list of two hundred and forty-six doctrines, which they had collected from the writings of that reformer, many of whose books, as well as other similar works, were publicly burned, and their contents denounced as heretical. The chief subject for consultation, as already noticed, was the conduct of Sir John Oldecastle, Lord Cobham; but as he was a favorite both of the King and the people, it was deemed necessary to proceed against him with caution. The archbishop and the other prelates accordingly went to the King, and laid before him most grievous complaints against that excellent nobleman. Also one of Wickliff's writings, which had belonged to Lord Cobham, was read before the King, who declared he never heard such heresy, and consented to their proceeding against Lord Cobham; enjoining them, however, to pause till he himself had endeavored to persuade him to renounce his errors. The King having admonished this Christian nobleman to submit to "his mother, the holy church, and as an obedient child to acknowledge himself in fault"; he at once replied, "You, most worthy prince, I am always ready and willing to obey, as you are the appointed minister of God, bearing the sword for the punishment of evil doers." He then stated his readiness to obey him in all earthly things. "But as touching the Pope," added he, "and his spirituality, I owe them neither suit nor service, as I know him, by the Scriptures, to be the great anti-christ, the son of perdition, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place." When the King heard this, he would no longer talk with him.

The archbishop having received permission to proceed, sent his chief summoner to the castle of Cowling, in Kent, to which place Lord Cobham had retired, where he availed himself of the privileges then possessed by the nobility, and refused to obey the mandate. The archbishop then caused his citation to be affixed to the gates of Rochester Cathedral, and as Lord Cobham still refused to appear, sentence of excommunication

was pronounced against him, and the civil power was called upon to assist in his apprehension.

Lord Cobham, perceiving the dangers which now threatened him on every side, wrote a confession of his faith, grounded on the apostles' creed, noticing briefly the points on which he was accused; with this writing he went to the King, and with all meekness entreated his majesty to read it over, and judge how far he had offended. The King had blindly submitted to Romish domination; he not only refused to receive the paper, but commanded that it should be delivered to the archbishop. Lord Cobham then offered to prove his innocence by any of the methods allowed in those days, some of which, such as personal combat with his adversaries, appear strange and improper to us; but we must remember that they were legal customs in those times. Henry, however, had determined to leave this Christian nobleman to the power of his enemies, and allowed the archbishop's summons to be served upon him, in his royal presence. Lord Cobham then appealed to the Pope; but, worse than Festus of old, Henry refused to allow him to pursue his appeal: by the King's express command, he was arrested in his presence and committed to the Tower of London.

On the 23d of September, Lord Cobham was brought before the prelates then sitting in the chapter house of St. Paul's. The archbishop told him that he stood convicted of heresies, also excommunicated for refusing to obey his summons; notwithstanding which he was willing to give him absolution if he asked for it. Lord Cobham paid no attention to this offer, but took out of his bosom a writing concerning the articles whereof he was accused, and openly read it, delivering a copy to the archbishop. The paper contained in substance as follows: (1) That the sacrament of the altar is Christ's body in the form of bread. (2) As to penance, it is needful for every man that shall be saved, to forsake sin, and to do penance for former sins, with true confession, real contrition and due satisfaction, as God's law teacheth. (3) That images were permitted by the church, to represent to ignorant men the death and sufferings of Christ, but that whosoever worshipped them became an idolater. (4) As to pilgrimages, every man was a pilgrim to bliss or woe, and that he who

knew not God, and kept not his commandments, would be damned, although he went on all the pilgrimages in the world; while those who knew the will of God, and kept it, would be saved, though they never went on any pilgrimage as men go to Canterbury or Rome, or other places.

The archbishop told Lord Cobham that his writings contained many good things, but that there were other points on which he wished also to inquire. He then tried to lead him into further discussion upon the sacrament, and also inquired whether he believed "that every Christian man was necessarily bound to confess his sin to a priest ordained by the church."

The prisoner endeavored to avoid being drawn into an ensnaring discussion, and desired to abide by the writing he had given in. At length, he was again committed to prison till the Monday following, and required at that time particularly to answer, "Whether there remained material bread in the sacrament after the words of consecration, or not?" Arundel promised also to send him in writing, the determinations of the church on the points in question, that he might be instructed by them.

The unscriptural and superstitious notions held by the Church of Rome at that time (and they are not altered in our days) appear from the contents of the writing sent by the prelates to Lord Cobham, as promised. They stated: (1) That the faith and determination of the holy church respecting the sacrament was, that after the sacramental words were spoken by a priest in saying the mass, the bread and wine were turned into Christ's very body and blood; and that there remained nothing of the bread or wine which were there before the words were spoken. (2) That holy church had determined that every Christian man ought to come to a priest, ordained by the church, to be absolved by him. (3) That Christ gave his power to St. Peter, and granted that the same power should succeed to all Peter's successors, "which we call now Popes of Rome"; by whose power other ranks in the church were ordained, "unto whom Christian men ought to obey after the laws of the Church of Rome, and this is the determination of holy church." (4) Holy church hath determined that it is meritorious for

a Christian man to go on pilgrimage to holy places, and there to worship holy relics, and images of saints, apostles, and martyrs, confessors, and other saints, approved by the Church of Rome."

To these decisive and clear statements of their belief, was added the short yet pithy inquiry addressed to the prisoner, "How believe ye this article?" "How feel ye this article?" Reader, have we just ground to think that the opinion of the Church of Rome is changed on any of these points?—If not, then propose these questions to yourself: "How believe you this article?" "How feel you this article?" Can you place your trust and ground of confidence in the hour of death upon such doctrines, believing them to be according to the word of God, and consequently not resting upon Christ alone for salvation, but upon what "holy church hath determined?" These are the doctrines of the Church of Rome; and all within its pale are required to assent to them.

On the Monday, the trial was resumed at the Dominican convent, Ludgate. After being exposed to the taunts and insults of a rabble of monks and friars, Lord Cobham was again reminded of the accusations against him, and again offered absolution, if he submitted and desired it. "Nay," said the noble confessor, "forsooth I will not; for I never yet trespassed against you, and therefore I will not do it." And then kneeling down on the pavement, holding up his hands towards heaven, he said, "I confess myself here unto Thee, my eternal living God, that in my frail youth, I offended thee, O Lord, most grievously, by pride, wrath, covetousness, lust and intemperance. Many men have I injured in mine anger, and done other horrible sins: good Lord, I ask Thee mercy!" He then stood up, and with tears in his eyes exclaimed, with a loud voice, "Lo! good people, lo! for breaking of God's law, and His great commandments, these men never yet cursed me; but for their own laws and traditions most cruelly do they handle me and other men. Therefore, both they and their laws, according to the promise of God, shall be utterly destroyed."

This powerful address threw the Romish clergy into confusion for a time. The archbishop then proceeded to examine the prisoner as to his belief, to which he

replied, "I believe fully and faithfully in the laws of God. I believe that all is true which is contained in the sacred Scriptures of the Bible. Finally, I believe all that my Lord God would that I should believe." He was next required to answer the writing sent him by the bishops, which has been already mentioned, especially concerning the sacrament of the altar. With that writing, he said, he had nothing to do. The prelate then asked, "Do you believe that there remains any material bread after the words of consecration, spoken over it?" After some discussion, "The Scriptures," said Cobham, "make no mention of material bread. In the sacrament there is both Christ's body and the bread; the bread is the thing that we see with our eyes; but the body of Christ is hid, and only to be seen by faith." Upon which they all cried out with one voice, "It is an heresy." One of the bishops in particular said, it was a manifest heresy to say that it is bread after the sacramental words be once spoken, for it is Christ's body only. Cobham replied, "St. Paul the apostle was, I am sure, as wise as you be now, and more godly learned, and he called it bread in his epistle to the Corinthians; 'The bread that we break,' saith he, 'is it not the partaking (or communion) of the body of Christ?' Lo! he calleth it bread, and not Christ's body, but a mean whereby we receive Christ's body."

Then said they again, Paul must be otherwise understood, for it is an heresy to say that it is bread after the consecration. Lord Cobham asked how they proved this: they replied, "It is against the determination of holy church!"

The examination of Lord Cobham extends to a considerable length. Throughout the whole scene he behaved with undaunted courage and Christian serenity. Friar Palmer, when examining him respecting the worship of images, said, "Sir, will you worship the cross of Christ that he died upon?"—"Where is it?" said Lord Cobham.—"Suppose it was here," said the friar.—"This is indeed a wise man," said Lord Cobham, "to ask me such a question, when he knows not where the thing is! But what worship shall I do to it?"—One of the clergy answered, "Such worship as Paul speaketh of. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord.'"—"This," said Lord

Cobham, and spread his arms abroad. "This is a cross, and better than your cross of wood, as it is created of God (not made by man); yet I will not seek to have it worshipped."—"Sir," said the Bishop of London, "you know that Christ died upon a material cross."—"Yea," replied Lord Cobham; "and I know also, that our salvation came not by the material cross, but by Him alone that died thereon. And well I know that holy saint Paul rejoiced in no other cross, but in Christ's death and sufferings only; and in his own suffering like persecution with him, for the selfsame truth that Christ had suffered for before."

Sentence of condemnation was then read: in this was set forth, that he was a heretic respecting the two sacraments of the altar, and penance, and as to the Pope's power, and pilgrimages. But we also find recorded that they had followed Christ's example, who "willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he might be converted and live!" Surely, it is not for the Church of Rome to accuse Protestants of wresting the Scriptures to their own purposes!

It appears to have been Arundel's constant practice to make a great outward show of lenity and kindness to his prisoners, while he was in reality acting towards them with unrelenting barbarity. His own registers at Lambeth Palace, repeatedly stated, that "he made use of the most sweet and gentle terms in addressing the prisoner; and that when he found his endeavors to reclaim him were vain, he was compelled to pronounce sentence, and he did so with the bitterest sorrow!"*

When the sentence had been read, Lord Cobham, with a cheerful countenance, said: "Though ye judge my body, which is but a wretched thing, yet I am certain and sure ye can do no harm to my soul, any more than Satan did to the soul of Job. He that created it, will, of His infinite mercy, and according to His promise,

*A modern Romish historian describes the conduct of Lord Cobham to have been "as arrogant and insulting as that of his judge was mild and dignified." It has been well remarked, "It is fitting indeed that we should know in what manner an English Roman Catholic historian speaks of such translations at this time."

save it. Of this I have no manner of doubt; and as concerning the articles of my belief, by the grace of my eternal God I will stand to them even to the very death." He then turned to the people, and said, with a loud voice, "Good Christian people, for God's love, be well aware of these men, else they will beguile you, and lead you blindfold into hell with themselves." Then kneeling down, and lifting up his hands and eyes to heaven, he prayed thus: "Lord God eternal, I beseech Thee, of Thy great mercy's sake, to forgive my persecutors, if it be Thy blessed will." After this he was taken back to the Tower, where he was kept prisoner for a considerable time.

PART II.

The history of Lord Cobham after his condemnation, may be briefly related. Although his enemies sentenced him to die, they hesitated as to putting him to death immediately; for he was a popular character, and, as one of their own historians relates, "a man of integrity, dearly beloved by the King." These concurring circumstances induced them to delay his public execution for a few weeks; meanwhile, they circulated slanderous reports respecting his character, affirming, among other things, that he had recanted; and publishing a form of abjuration, which they said he had signed; upon which Lord Cobham caused another paper to be posted up, contradicting these false assertions.

Whatever caused the delay, it gave him an opportunity for escape: availing himself of a dark night, he fled into Wales, where he remained for four years.

The persecution against the Lollards at this time was very severe: a proclamation being issued to forbid their assemblies, they no longer dared to meet openly for their devotions: but, like the primitive Christians, they met in small companies, often in the dead of the night. St. Giles' fields, then a thicket or copse, was a place of frequent resort on these occasions: a company assembled there on the night of the 6th of January, 1414. The enemies of the Lollards artfully availed themselves of this opportunity to excite the King's anger against them still more severely. They went to him at Eltham, and informed him that Lord Cobham

was then in St. Giles' fields, at the head of twenty thousand of his followers, intending to destroy his persecutors, seize the King's person, and make himself governor of the realm.

Henry never was wanting in personal bravery: he armed the soldiers then about his palace, and instantly marched to the place. He attacked the few Lollards who were assembled, killing about twenty, and taking sixty prisoners; he then pressed forward, thinking he had only met with an advanced guard, but found that he had routed the whole body.

Strange to say, popish historians have endeavored to raise a story upon this slight foundation, and have accused the Lollards of rebellion! But whoever peruses attentively the evidence which Fox has adduced, and fairly examines the complete investigation of the subject which he has given, will be fully satisfied; and, with all impartial historians, will consider the story as a gross fiction. It does not appear that Lord Cobham was present: however, in the inflamed state in which the mind of the King then was, this charge served as a new ground of accusation. A bill of attainder was passed against him, and a reward of a thousand marks offered for his apprehension, with the further boon of a perpetual exemption from taxes to the town whose inhabitants should secure him. The prisoners to the number of thirty-six, including Sir Roger Acton, and Beverley, one of their preachers, were hanged and burned, near the spot where they were taken.

Towards the end of the year 1417, Lord Cobham was apprehended in Wales, by Lord Powis, and sent as a prisoner to London. His death was not long delayed: he was dragged upon a hurdle, with insult and barbarity, to St. Giles' fields, and there hung alive in chains upon a gallows; and a fire being kindled beneath, he was burned slowly to death.

Exact particulars of his last moments have not been preserved. There is, however, good ground for believing that he was enabled to resign himself patiently to the will of God, and to derive comfort and support from the sacred Scriptures; it is also said, that he suffered this painful and ignominious death "with the utmost bravery and most triumphant joy, exhorting the people

to follow the instructions which God had given them in the Scriptures, and to disclaim those false teachers whose lives and conversation were so contrary to Christ and His religion."

Arundel died in February, 1414, and was succeeded in his see by Henry Chichely, who continued Archbishop of Canterbury till April, 1443. He was a more violent persecutor than his predecessor; by his influence a law was passed, in 1415, enacting that the chancellor, the judges, justices, mayors, sheriffs, and all other magistrates, should, on admission to their offices, make oath that they would do everything in their power to extirpate the Lollards out of the kingdom, and assist the ecclesiastical authorities in persecuting these followers of Christ. Thus, by banishment, forced abjurations, and the flames, the vestiges of godliness were, for a time, almost effaced throughout the land.

The accounts of those who suffered are very imperfect; but from the registries of the bishops, and the other documents, they appear to have been numerous, and their sufferings were severe. Surely we ought to be thankful that we live in different times!

John Claydon, a furrier, was carried before the archbishop in the year 1415, and accused of heresy. The chief ground of accusation against him was, that having formerly been imprisoned as a heretic, and having abjured his opinions, he was found to have in his possession a book called "The Lanthorn of Light," which pointed out various errors of the Church of Rome.* The book had been written at his expense (printing was not then invented), and three of his servants were examined to prove, that although he could read himself, he had delighted to hear it read by others, and said, "that many things he had heard from this book were profitable, good and healthful to his soul." He was burned in Smithfield, with Richard Turming, a baker.

In the year 1416, Archbishop Chichely issued a mandate, which appears in the records of that period,

*This tract is reprinted in the "Writings of the British Reformers, published by the Religious Tract Society.

directing that three persons in every parish should be examined twice every year upon oath, and required to inform against any persons whom they knew, or understood to frequent private conventicles, or who differed in their life or manners from the common conversation of Catholic men, or to have any suspected books in the English language, that process might be made against them; if not sentenced to be burned, they were to be kept in prison until the next convocation of the clergy.

The names of many individuals of all ranks are recorded, who suffered under this persecution; several gave way to these severities, and abjured; while others "accepted not of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." But notwithstanding their sufferings, there does not appear any just ground for imputing to the Lollards a departure from the injunction of the apostle, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," so far as concerned the things of this world.

In 1422, died Henry V. The reader will have seen that he was not only distinguished by the false glare of splendor reflected upon him as a hero and a conqueror, but that his name stands recorded as one who joined in "wearing out the saints of the Most High."

Henry VI, who succeeded to the throne, was an infant, and full power continued in the hands of the persecutors. In the first year of this reign was burned William Taylor, a priest in the diocese of Canterbury, for having taught what was then called heresy, at Bristol; the substance of which appears to have been, that he had said, God alone is to be adored, and that saints are not to be worshipped. He was, however, allowed to offer an explanation, and at that time only condemned to perpetual imprisonment. Upon further consideration, even this sentence was about to be recalled, when some writings which had passed between him and another priest named Smith, were put into the hands of the Bishop of Worcester, and he was again brought into trouble; although he had only asserted, "That every petition and prayer, for any supernatural gift, ought to be directed to God alone, and not to any creature." Taylor was, at last, referred to the four orders of friars for examination: by them he was convicted of heresy for the above doctrine, and for having held that "to pray to any creature is to commit idola-

try''; that is, for asserting a maxim which is the peculiar distinction between true religion and idolatry, between real Christianity and heathenism. He was then degraded according to the usual form, by taking from him in succession the cup and paten, the Gospels and the tunicle, the Epistles, the cruet which held the oil for extreme unction, the candlestick, the book of exorcisms against evil spirits, the church-door key, and the surplice; his hair was then cut so as to destroy the tonsure, or manner in which it is usually worn by priests; all this mummary having been performed, he was committed to the flames.

In the year 1424, one John Florence, a turner residing in Norfolk, was accused of holding heretical opinions against the Pope, and the worship of images. He was brought before the chancellor of the diocese; but submitting himself to the authority of the church, was allowed to escape, upon performing penance, and being disciplined with a rod before all the people for three Sundays in the cathedral at Norwich, and then for three other Sundays within his own parish church at Shelton. As a part of this penance, he had to walk in a procession bare-headed, bare-footed, and also bare-necked, in a canvas shirt and canvas breeches, carrying a taper.

Many others appear to have suffered similar persecutions in the diocese of Norwich, between the years 1424 and 1428, and a larger number between 1428 and 1431. Upwards of one hundred and twenty individuals are mentioned by name, who were apprehended during the latter period, and examined upon suspicion of heresy. Some of them were put to death, others imprisoned, the remainder were compelled to abjure, and to do such penance as it pleased the bishop and his chancellor to appoint, which usually was very severe.

One circumstance appears plain from the registers of their persecutors, and is well worthy of being noted: that these martyrs do not appear to have held a variety of doctrines and opinions, as the Roman Catholics contend is always the consequence of leaving that communion: their doctrines were uniform; and scarcely one not now held by every true Protestant.

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